

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

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R 011207Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5194

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 3091

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CB

SUBJECT: FOREIGN DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION IN PHNOM PENH

REF: A. RANGOON 0504

B. PHNOM PENH 2463 (NOTAL)

C. PHNOM PENH 3032

D. PHNOM PENH 3035

1. CONJUNCTURE OF IMF WITHDRAWAL OF ITS RES REP, INDEFINITE BURMESE CLOSURE OF ITS MISSION, TOKYO WOBBLIES, THREATENING INDIAN PULLOUT (REFTELS) RISKS CREATING A SELF-SUSTAINING TREND. WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBLE DOWNGRADING OF BRITISH AND THAI MISSIONS.

2. BRITAIN. TO JUDGE FROM REMARKS HE MADE TO ME BEFORE GOING ON HOME LEAVE TODAY 01 MARCH, BRITISH AMBASSADOR JOHN POWELL-JONES MAY BE COMING UNDER SOME PRESSURE FROM LONDON TO REDUCE AND/OR DOWNGRADE HIS EMBASSY. ON 25 FEBRUARY LONDON REFUSED HIS REQUEST THAT EVACUATED DEPENDENTS BE PERMITTED TO STAY ON IN BANGKOK WITH A VIEW TOWARDS RETURN TO PHNOM PENH;
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INSTEAD THE FOREIGN OFFICE DECIDED TO RETURN THEM TO

BRITAIN. HMG'S DECISION MAY HAVE BEEN BASED ON POWELL-JONES' REPORTING, WHICH WE SUSPECT WENT VERY PESSIMISTIC IN JANUARY AND EARLY FEBRUARY. THE PIGEONS MAY NOW BE COMING HOME TO ROOST. POWELL-JONES SAYS THAT HE EXPECTS TO BE ASKED BY THE FOREIGN OFFICE WHY BRITAIN SHOULD HAVE MORE THAN A TOKEN MISSION HERE, SINCE THERE APPEARS TO BE NO PROGRESS TOWARDS PEACE AND BRITAIN HAS NO REAL ROLE TO PLAY. IN ANSWER TO QUESTIONS, HE SAYS HE WILL BE BACK IN MAY "IF ALL GOES ACCORDING TO PLAN."

3. IN VIEW OF THESE ATMOSPHERICS, WE SHOULD THINK OF WAYS TO REINFORCE BRITAIN'S WILL TO STAY THE COURSE HERE. ONE POSSIBILITY WOULD BE TO USE WASHINGTON CONTACT AT SENIOR EMBASSY LEVEL TO INSERT THE IDEA THAT AT SOME POINT BRITISH MAY BE ABLE TO PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN PEACEMAKING IN CAMBODIA. THIS REMARK MIGHT BE PUT IN THE CONTEXT OF A REVIEW OF THE MORE UPBEAT TRENDS WE NOW SEE THIS DRY SEASON. HOWEVER, ANY DIRECT DISCUSSION BY US OF THE STATUS OF THE BRITISH EMBASSY HERE WOULD BE EMBARRASSING TO POWELL-JONES AND UNPRODUCTIVE IF NOT DAMAGING.

4. THAILAND. AMBASSADOR CHANA SAMUDAVANIJA, TARNISHED BY ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION AND LECHERY, WILL SHORTLY LEAVE POST. AMEMBASSY BANGKOK MAY KNOW WHETHER OR NOT A REPLACEMENT IS ALREADY IN THE WORKS. OUR CONCERN IS THAT THE THAI MAY OPT TO CARRY ON THEIR RELATIONS AT MILITARY LEVEL (GENERAL KRIANGSAK IS EXPECTED HERE AGAIN ON 05 MARCH FOR WHAT MUST BE HIS 7TH OR 8TH VISIT SINCE THE START OF THE WAR) AND NOT REPLACE CHANA SAMUDAVANIJA. THAT WOULD BE DEMORALIZING, AND SHOULD BE AVOIDED IF WE CAN USEFULLY INTERVENE.

5. OTHER ACTIONS. HARD TO TELL FROM THIS DISTANCE WHETHER THERE IS ANYTHING THAT CAN BE DONE WITH THE INDIANS. CONCEIVABLY THEY MIGHT BE SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE SUGGESTION THAT CONDITIONS MAY BE DEVELOPING IN CAMBODIA TOWARD A POIT WHERE NEW PEACE INITIATIVES MAY BE POSSIBLE, AND THAT INDIA WITH ITS SPECIAL STATUS

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AS AN ICC CAMBODIA MEMBER SHOULD MAKE SURE THAT IT REMAINS PRESENT. SUCH A PITCH COULD BE BACKED UP BY A REVIEW OF THE MILITARY SITUATION. WE COULD APPROACH CHARGE D'AFFAIRS NAEGAMWALA (THIRD SECRETARY) HERE, BUT HAVE SOME DOUBTS AS TO HIS ABILITY TO ABSORB IT; A DELHI VENUE WOULD BE MUCH BETTER IF THE STATE OF COMMUNICATIONS ON INDOCHINA PERMITS IT.

6. RE BURMA, WOULD APPRECIATE AMEMBASSY RANGOON
SUGGESTIONS ON HOW BEST TO TRY TO CONTACT THE GUB
ON CLOSURE OF ITS OFFICE. IN PARTICULAR, HOW CAN THE
EVIDENCE OF THE IMPROVING SECURITY SITUATION HERE BE
BROUGHT HOME TO RANGOON? WOULD THE THAI MILITARY BE
A POSSIBLE CHANNEL? IS THERE A BUDDHIST CHANNEL?

7. IN LIGHT OF THE OVERALL PATTERN DESCRIBED ABOVE,
THE DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEM POSED BY IMF
RES REP EVERS' DEPARTURE STRIKES US AS INADEQUATE.
AN EARLY VISIT BY CHABRIER, HEAD OF THE SOUTHEAST
ASIA SECTION OF THE ASIA DEPARTMENT OF IMF, APPEARS
TO US THE BEST WAY TO RESTORE CONFIDENCE. VISIT SHOULD
BE KEYED TO CURRENT ECONOMIC POLICY QUESTIONS:
HOW TO COMBAT INFLATION? SHOULD THE RIEL BE AGAIN
DEVALUED? CAN THE IMF HELP WITH TAX REFORM PROMISED
BY THE LON BORET GOVERNMENT? TO GET ALL OF THIS
MOVING WE WILL SUGGEST TO THE GKR, UNLESS YOU OBJECT,
THAT IT ASK FOR EARLY CHABRIER VISIT.
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